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USDA Announces Funding to Expand School Community Gardens and Garden-Based Learning Opportunities

WASHINGTON, Aug. 25, 2010 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that USDA will establish a People's Garden School Pilot Program to develop and run community gardens at eligible high-poverty schools; teach students involved in the gardens about agriculture production practices, diet, and nutrition; and evaluate the learning outcomes. This \$1 million pilot program is authorized under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act. A cooperative agreement will be awarded to implement a program in up to five States. To be eligible as project sites, schools must have 50 percent or more students qualifying for free or reduced-price school meals.

"Grass roots community gardens and agriculture programs have great promise for teaching our kids about food production and nutrition at the local level," said Vilsack. "Learning where food comes from and what fresh foods taste like, and the pride of growing and serving vegetables and fruits that grew through your own effort, are life-changing experiences. All of us at USDA are proud to make this possible."

Part of a broad USDA effort to provide children with access to a nutritious and safe diet, this initiative also aims to influence healthier choices for all American households. Produce raised in the gardens can be used in the schools' meals and by student households, local food banks, or senior center nutrition programs.

Through this pilot program, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service seeks to identify models of successful school garden initiatives which then can be marketed to the K-12 community for inspiration, ideas, and replication.

Improving USDA's child nutrition programs is a top priority of the Obama Administration. Congress is currently considering legislation to bolster the Child Nutrition Act, which authorizes the National School Lunch, School Breakfast, and Summer Food Service Programs. These programs serve nearly 32 million children each school day and work in concert to form a national safety net against hunger. Improving the Child Nutrition Act is the legislative centerpiece of First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! Campaign and was highlighted in the White House report *Solving the Problem of Childhood Obesity Within a Generation*, released on May 11. By passing strong reauthorization legislation, the Administration hopes to reduce hunger, promote access, and improve the overall health and nutrition of children throughout the country. To learn more about the First Lady's Let's Move! campaign, visit www.LetsMove.gov

<<http://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=50482204&msgid=272147&act=C1KF&c=590864&destination=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.letsmove.gov%2F>> .

The grant is available to public and not-for-profit organizations. Grant applications may be submitted by email to: FY2010Prop_PeoplesGarden@fns.usda.gov or through [www.grants.gov](http://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=50482204&msgid=272147&act=C1KF&c=590864&destination=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.grants.gov%2F) <<http://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=50482204&msgid=272147&act=C1KF&c=590864&destination=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.grants.gov%2F>> . The Request for Applications is available on-line at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/outreach/grants/garden.htm> <<http://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=50482204&msgid=272147&act=C1KF&c=590864&destination=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.fns.usda.gov%2Ffns%2Foutreach%2Fgrants%2Fgarden.htm>> . The deadline for applications is November 8, 2010.

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) oversees the administration of 15 nutrition assistance programs, including the child nutrition programs that touch the lives of one in four Americans over the course of a year. These programs work in concert to form a national safety net against hunger. Visit www.fns.usda.gov <<http://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=50482204&msgid=272147&act=C1KF&c=590864&destination=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.fns.usda.gov%2F>> for information about FNS and the USDA nutrition assistance programs.

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